

March 29, 2012

### **DEATH OF GRIZZLY AN OMINOUS START TO 2012 SEASON**

(Calgary, AB) Only days after grizzly bears first began emerging from their winter's hibernation, one has been killed by a landowner near Alberta's Crowsnest Pass.

It's been two years since grizzly bears were listed as *Threatened* under the Alberta *Wildlife Act*, and four years since publication of the Province's *Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan*, yet if anything, the Alberta to which grizzly bears are waking up in 2012 is worse than the one to which they woke up in 2008.

"There is an array of recommendations in the *Recovery Plan* that have yet to be implemented," says Sarah Elmeligi of CPAWS-Southern Alberta. "For example, the *Plan* recommends that several conflict-prevention positions be created with resources to work with landowners and other individuals working in grizzly bear habitat. Yet, four years later, this hasn't been done."

Known human-caused grizzly bear deaths declined from 21 in 2010 to 18 in 2011. Of those 18 deaths, five bears were killed illegally, two were mistaken for black bears, two were killed in self-defence, and one bear was destroyed as a problem bear.

"Many of the grizzly deaths in 2011 were likely preventable with better education to avoid human-bear conflict and improved management of human access into grizzly bear habitat," says Madeline Wilson of Alberta Wilderness Association "Bear Smart programs are known to reduce human-bear conflicts, and thus bear deaths; however, there are not enough of these programs in the province, and where they do exist, they are under-resourced and rely largely on the efforts of volunteers."

"Designating grizzly bears as *Threatened* demonstrates a commitment on behalf of the people of Alberta and its government to take steps to recover this species from below 700 bears to sustainable levels," says Wendy Francis of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative "But that won't happen just by writing a plan and then ignoring most of its recommendations. Action needs to be taken on the ground to educate the public about how to avoid conflicts with bears and to protect grizzly bear habitat."

Meanwhile, high on Alberta's mountain slopes, the snow continues to melt and bears are awakening from hibernation. What kind of future do they face in 2012, and how many bears will unnecessarily die because of ignorance or poorly-managed garbage? More importantly, what steps will the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development take this year to reduce preventable grizzly bear deaths?

Conservation groups are calling on the provincial government to implement the *Recovery Plan's* recommendations by committing adequate resources to conflict reduction efforts and by reducing road and trail densities and motorized access into grizzly bear habitat.

For more information:

Madeline Wilson – Alberta Wilderness Association: 403-283-2025

Wendy Francis – Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative: 403-763-8633